CHARACTERISTICS
OF LEIGH HUNT

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CHARACTERISTICS OF LEIGH HUNT.

Characteristics of Leigh Hunt,

AS EXHIBITED IN THAT

TYPICAL LITERARY PERIODICAL,

"LEIGH HUNT'S LONDON JOURNAL"

(1834–35).

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With Illustrative Notes.

BY

LAUNCELOT CROSS.

"I KEN THE BANKS WHERE AMARANTHS BLOW,
HAVE TRACED THE FOUNT WHENCE STREAMS OF NECTAR FLOW."
Coleridge.

LONDON: SIMPKIN, MARSHALL, AND CO.

MDCCCLXXVIII.

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To ALEXANDER IRELAND, Esq.

DEAR IRELAND,

It is altogether owing to your gentle importunity that my remarks on Leigh Hunt's London Journal have assumed their present form, and I could not but yield to the reasons you urge for bringing them before the public.

You have identified yourself with the names of Lamb, Hazlitt, and Hunt, by your zealous search after all that has come from their pens, but more eminently by your trilogy regarding their productions, and contemporaneous opinions thereupon.* To you, therefore, above all others that I know, these humble pages may be most appropriately dedicated.

If the reasons I have mentioned were insufficient to justify me, the heaven of your good feelings should suffer violence at my hands in right of the name of Friend—which hourly-desecrated word I use in all its fulness and with all reverence for its sacred import. Through you I have realised in literary matters the fulfilment of the words of Sir William Temple, which Hunt took as his motto for *The Companion:* "Something alone yet not alone, to be wished, and only to be found, in a Friend."

Yours faithfully,

LAUNCELOT CROSS.

15th April, 1878.

* The following is the title of Mr. Ireland's book:—"List of the Writings of WILLIAM HAZLITT and LEIGH HUNT, chronologically arranged; with Notes, Descriptive, Critical, and Explanatory, and a Selection of Opinions, regarding their Genius and Characteristics, by distinguished contemporaries and friends, as well as by subsequent critics; preceded by a Review of, and Extracts from, Barry Cornwall's 'Memorials of Charles Lamb;' with a Few Words on William Hazlitt and his Writings, and a Chronological List of the Works of Charles Lamb. By ALEXANDER IRELAND [Manchester] 1868. (Privately printed.)"

———" HUNT—one of those happy souls
Which are the salt of earth, and without whom
This earth would smell like what it is—a tomb;
Who is what others seem." SHELLEY.

"Mr. Hunt is . . . a man of genius in a very strict sense of that word, and in all the senses which it bears or implies . . . of child-like, open character . . . " CARLYLE.

"Hunt was a beautiful old man. In truth I never saw a finer countenance, either as to the mould of features or the expression, nor any that showed the play of feeling so perfectly. . . . It was like a child's face in this respect. . . . His looks talk to the reader with the tender vivacity of youth." NATHANIEL HAWTHORNE.

"To carry on the feelings of childhood into the powers of manhood, to combine the child's sense of wonder and novelty with the appearances which every day for perhaps forty years had rendered familiar,

With sun and moon and stars throughout the year,
And man and woman ———,

this is the character and privilege of genius, and one of the marks which distinguish genius from talents." COLERIDGE.

ANALYSIS.

LEIGH HUNT'S LONDON JOURNAL, 1834-35. It is not a handy-book such as Johnson liked: it is a love of a book, ample enough to fill your arms, and receive you into its bosom. Hunt calls such a folio "a new and lawful Babel," having an aspect like a Religion. Whilst thus speaking he affords a text for such an undertaking—viz., LOVE! COMMON TASK! that is Work and Communion—(pages 7-8.)

THE PROMISE!—Essentials of a literary journalist—1. Perception of his Task. 2. Recognition equally of reader and editor. 3. Performance through Love—Fortunate are we in having one with Hunt's qualifications to enter on such a scheme. His spirit: his antecedents: the hostages we have from him in a laurelled reputation and household necessities—(8). Argument upon the Stimulus of Necessity—(9). General view of the fulfilment of the promise. Consideration of the Object of the Journal: the Belief it would inculcate: the Spirit which gives to it the breath of Life. The object is stated to be Pleasure—(10). The object includes Faith, which looks to higher modes of existence—(11). And resolves itself into Belief in a *Cheerful Religion*. The sovran arbitrary, informing, moving, and animating Spirit is confessed to be Love—which has to be the Teacher of knowledge and advancement, to the excommunication of envy, hatred, and malice, and all uncharitableness—(13).

EXECUTION! Love's Labours first exercised in making readers note the Time of the issue of the Journal, as well as its general matter—(14)—Articles called *The Week*—(15. Memorials—*Birthdays of Eminent Men:* his exquisite appreciation of leading qualities, and choice language in which it is conveyed—(16). *Romances of Real Life*, also, a systematic performance, appears with hebdomadal regularity. His management of the most painful and graceless of an editor's home-affairs - Communications from Correspondents—(18). His education of Readers—resulting in certain able contributors – (20). Dangerous it is to appraise contemporary genius, or worth of any kind: hard in such cases is it to hold the diamond poised scales of justice, harder still to escape the charge of enmity or invidiousness. Hunt shrinks not from but seeks the duty—(21). Carlyle, Goethe (21), Shelley, Keats, Christopher North, Hazlitt, Lamb—(22) Bentham, Hugh Miller, Landseer—(23) Imbues the Journal with his own personality, not only by expressions of opinions, tastes and feelings, but by reminiscences like household talk. Landor and his fine Ode—(24). *A.D.* The "rathe primrose" of genius—Egerton Webbe. Hunt's egotism in being the herald of genius—(25). Reconciliations after misjudgments of contemporaries. The Vanities of talent chastened: real infirmities condoned and wept over: nay, even perverseness compromised - (26). Graceful Recantations - (27). Hunt's frequent pithy miniature sentences. The custom of italicising sentences with him found its bright consummate flower—(30). He is the best expounder of the beauties and subtleties of poesy. Instances of the origin of his choicest writings on the subject.—The Journal has now become Books within a Book. *The Town: Romances of Real Life: The Seer: Hazlitt's Characters of Shakespeare's Plays: Elia: Imagination and Fancy: Wit and Humour: Men, Women and Books* - (31). Enthusiasm in matters of Beauty and Art. *Water Colours: Painted Windows: Paganini: The Piano*—for which he earnestly desired its present popularity—(32). Hunt's own Art—sentences of force and beauty (33). His own Articles—their variety – their personal tone – and communicativeness of Autobiographical reminiscences—(35). The single satiric touch in the whole Journal. Query, is it not a printer's error? – (36). His Royal Ordinance throughout is to seek the good and beautiful and ensue them. Instances of his method in following the Ordinance. The still sad music of Humanity—(37). Summary of the characteristics of the Journal, its influence on present literature and minds - it is a model for all such literary undertakings—(38).

ONLY IN DISCOURSES TAUGHT AND SPOKEN FOR THE SAKE OF INSTRUCTION, AND REALLY WRITTEN IN THE SOUL ABOUT THINGS JUST, AND BEAUTIFUL, AND GOOD, THERE IS FOUND WHAT IS CLEAR AND PERFECT, AND WORTHY OF STUDY.

Plato: Phædrus. 143.

THE RANGE OF MIND MAKES THE GLAD WRITER.

Emerson.

A Typical Literary Periodical.

I ken the banks where amaranths blow,
Have traced the fount whence streams of nectar flow.
COLERIDGE.

IT lies before us—or, rather, under our arms—an ample folio, two volumes in one. It opens into two large hemispheres of the bright and pleasant world of Literature, within which you can rest in the embrace of beauty, whilst you are satiated with its milk and honey. We have made our notes upon its oft-perused, wide-spread leaves, and thereupon we have, also, pensively reposed in the course of our intellectual pilgrimage—

"some happy tone
Of meditation, stepping in between
The beauty coming and the beauty gone.

It is one of the old race, when stature, as well as virtue, was of giant growth: an immediate descendant of those mighty Anakim, our elder writers, who, the moment they appeared, became new elemental powers in literature: formed libraries in themselves: comprised whole generations in their capacious wombs. Many of our early cheap periodicals partook of the cyclopean individuality and encyclopædian fecundity of their great progenitors. *Chambers's Edinburgh Journal; Knight's Penny Magazine; The Romancist*—those genii which brought

the supernal glories of learning into the modest compass of a domestic luxury and necessity, by placing it on the pecuniary level of the working man's pot of beer;—those firstborn children of cheap literature, were of the grand dimensions of *Puffendorf's Law of Nations*, of the *Works of the learned Sir Thomas Browne, Kt.*, of *Urry's Chaucer*, of the golden tomes of *Jeremy Taylor:* and in such magnificent proportions appeared the journal now under our notice, and the pressure of our arms,—which qualification, as to size, conjoined with that of its virtues, justifies its reposing, as it does when the hour of perusal is over, on the same shelf with the good company just named. No doubt when Leigh Hunt projected his Journal, the truth which he afterwards expressed in one of its numbers was moving about his brain in an unwinged, caterpillar state, manifesting itself in a creative act instead of words: when the instinct did clothe itself in language, and issue forth to bask in the sunlight of written speech, the shape it assumed was:—"A great book—a folio,—was a thing to look up to,—to build,—a new and lawful Babel, and therefore it had an aspect more like a religion. Well; Love is religion too, and of the best: and so we will return to our Common Task."

This is exactly the light in which we view the *London Journal*, and the quotation, whilst it brings us to our purpose, gives us a very text for it—"Love—Common Task."

Herein lie the essentials of a true journalist. (1) He must consider what he has to accomplish as *a task*, or duty: (2) this duty must be recognised as affecting the writer and reader *in common*: (3) it can only be fitly undertaken and properly fulfilled under the inspiration and by the sustainment of *Love*. Happy for himself was it that our Journalist had so exalted an appreciation of his work, and his position in regard to it: thrice happy is it for ourselves that he was so accomplished, tuneful, lark-soaring a spirit as Leigh Hunt! We have much to expect from the associate of minds that glorified the

opening of the present century: from the author of some of the most charming essays in our language—of which, (long ere this Journal appeared) many of our eminent men had their select favourites: from the poet of the *Story of Rimini* and *Foliage*: from the warbler of many brief, delicious melodies: from the social champion who fought and suffered in an era of fierce, blind political excitement, but who has now so chastened his hopes and hatreds with the philosophic mind that years have brought, that from the charmed circle wherein he sits calm and music-breathing, political questions, with all their unholy din and bitterness, are excluded. We may confidently anticipate that a periodical in his hands will prove a compendium of the characteristics of the mature literary man in the most complete sense; for, *Firstly*, we have in him one of excellent reputation,—in the ripe vigour of fifty years,—who in everything he undertakes will be careful to satisfy the most sensitive of critics:—he cannot afford to allow them grounds for despising either his matter or his manner—in a word, we can rely on the display of all his powers and graces: and, *Secondly*, we shall have the full results of his extensive and varied reading, inasmuch as (*a*) it is always a labour of love with him (as already set forth), or, as we should state it, a delightful necessity of his existence to communicate all that he knows—his nature being not that of a reservoir ever receiving, rarely dispensing, but that of a fountain which unceasingly rises, overflows, and blesses all it can reach, with its rejoicing and shining waters: and (*b*) he is, also, stimulated by his own requirements and his household affections, which will not permit him to leave any worthy subject unhandled that can secure the attention of readers.

We are quite aware of Leigh Hunt's roguish dispraise of such incentives. In his article upon *The Fortunes of Genius*, he argues that certain authors might not have written identically the same works which they have produced under the stimulus of the lowest and most humiliating cares; but that

under conditions quite suitable to their nature they might have "produced as many, or even better." This is true to a certain extent; nevertheless, no one has more forcibly, more beautifully, or more consistently demonstrated the lovely results of misfortune than himself—the beneficent growths that may spring out of human suffering. As he states it in the same article, "certain noble kinds of pain may be necessary to produce certain sublimities of composition, whether in musical or other writing." We, therefore, do not undervalue the needs which urge our own Journalist to let his weekly numbers be of the best material and workmanship: they assure us of our man: that he will be up to time and do his best in beginning, continuing and concluding: and we can apply to him his own words regarding Johnson—"How much good and entertainment did not the very necessities of such a man help to produce us!"—So has it proved: for we have obtained not only the vast miscellanea of which he was the most industrious of compilers—which if indexed according to his suggestion in another work, or after the manner of Carlyle's writings, would be found to be one of the finest digests of literature,—but we have from his own pen a regular series of brilliant articles, and literally Books—newly composed in the pages of the Journal—books germinated—books reprinted—books within a book, as we shall afterwards specify. Briefly—in affording pleasure to weekly readers he has produced the princeliest of literary Journals to interest and charm posterity.

Returning to the statement made by our journalist, the points to be considered in his undertaking are—its Objects—the Belief it would inculcate—the Spirit in which it is designed: afterwards, we have to examine how far these have been fulfilled and displayed in the execution. Hunt fairly puts it in his very first column that he "proposes to furnish ingenuous minds of *all* classes, with such helps as he possesses towards a share in the pleasures of taste and scholarship;" in his second volume

he again states that one of his objects is to make "uneducated readers of taste and capacity acquainted with the pleasures of those who are educated: and we write articles of this description (*The Satyr of Mythology and the Poets*) accordingly in a spirit intended not to be unacceptable to either." He, also, in another place, lays it down that Pleasure was the object of the Journal—and he declares it with such sweet, sincere emphasis and gratitude—akin to that which inspired Wither when he indited his prison-poem, and avowed of poetry, that

> "Her divine skill taught me this,
> That from everything I saw,
> I could some invention draw:
> And raise Pleasure to her height
> Through the meanest objects' sight,"—

that we shall give his words at length. "Pleasure," he writes, "is, undoubtedly, the object of this Journal . . . the Pleasure recommended alike by the most doubting experiment, and the most trusting faith—that of making the utmost of this green and golden world, the smallest particles of whose surface we have not yet learned to turn to account,—that of profiting alike from the toil that is incumbent on us, and from 'the lilies of the valley that toil not, neither do they spin.' . . . We say nothing we do not think, and manifest no feelings *which are not those of our daily life* and our most habitual enjoyments, our talisman against trouble, and our best reward for exertion—a leaf, a flower, a fine passage of music, or poetry, or painting, a belief in a thousand capabilities of earth and man, give us literally as much delight as we say they do. We should not otherwise have been able to get through 'a sea of troubles,' nor to recommend as we do *the loving light that has saved us.*"

Not that Hunt contentedly submitted to material limitations, saying—"Thus much my senses teach me, therewith I will be content: my animal needs are satisfied; my intellect, wide-ranging, finds sufficient for its gratification and exercise—after

a day's excursion it can rest well-pleased in having won new spoils—had it striven after more it would have been exhausted and a new hunger created in my soul which probably would never be appeased, and my present enjoyments would have been deprived of their charm." No! his hopes and joys find food in this world, but look for fruition to the next. He accepts all around him as full of mystery as well as of beauty. He has a loving Belief.

An explanation of this is very simple with him, even from the most ordinary standpoint. "Had we possessed but two or three senses," he says, "we know very well that there are thousands of things round about us, of which we could have formed no conception." He thus naturally rises to belief in possibilities of higher modes of existence: in a glorious life beyond the present life: nay, in a positive spiritual sympathy, if not actual intercourse, between congenial souls although they share separate spheres. In his argument upon *Belief in Spirits*, contemning all proof that rests merely on the senses, he remarks—"Who thoroughly understands anything, even to the flowers at his feet? And cultivating these, shall we refuse to cultivate the stars, and the aspirations and thoughts angelical, and the hopes of rejoining friends and kindred, and all the flowers of heaven? No, assuredly, not while we have a star to *see*, and a thought to reach it." His reasoning is appropriately concluded by his own, now well-known, lines entitled *An Angel in the House*, the drift of which is to lead us back from the ministering disembodied spirits he contemplates to tenderly acknowledge those that minister at our hearths, clothed for the present with flesh and blood—but who will hereafter be members of the celestial host. Again, when he writes on *Twilight*—that time when this present world steals away and others come round us—or say, that the worlds of the past and the future become blended and enwrap our souls; then, recalling "all mild and loving things," and dear

friends whose daily companionship is lost—with pensive cheerfulness he remarks—"Perhaps they are commissioned to be good angels over us;—perhaps they are now this minute in the room, smiling in the certainty of their own lovingness, and the knowledge of our future good."

There is nothing of darkness or despondency in a creed of such aspirations: nay, in all conditions, under all circumstances, Hunt announced that his was a "cheerful religion": and all his actions and writings betokened it. But then he took religion in its primitive sense; a belief in the good and beautiful, including in it all that elevates the soul in nature and human activities. "Even the admiration of a picture," he says, "is a kind of Religion, or additional tie on our consciences, and *rebinding* of us (for such is the meaning of the word religion), to the greatness and goodness of nature." The practice of such a religion may be best explained by his own words, in his article on *Life after Death*:—"We are for making the most of the present world, as if there were no hereafter; and the most of hereafter, as if there were no present world." Can we then do aught but sympathise with his efforts, and give credence to his earnestness, when he further meekly professes that he "would fain do something, however small and light, towards Christianizing public manners?" His religion, indeed, included all things in its wide embrace, the small as well as the great. Whilst admiring the wondrous accomplishments of intellect, he did not disparage, nay he gave supremacy to actions dictated by the heart,—"where the happiest wisdom lies," as he remarked; and happily illustrated by the "beautiful feature in the angelical hierarchy of the Jews, where the seraphs rank first, and the cherubs after: that is to say, Love before Knowledge." He did not, however, dissever the two things, but he wished to see "Love enshrined as the only teacher of all knowlege and advancement:" and so sacredly did he hold to this principle in conducting the Journal (from

which all our quotations are made), that on the publication of his *Captain Sword and Captain Pen*, he gave no notice of the poem in its pages, because he would not allow politics to enter into its "sequestered province." Not that politics can positively be excluded from anything: but their special consideration—the turmoil of their party arguments and schemes and passions—can, and ought to be, kept remote when human welfare is deeply wished. Finally, in stating that as conductor of the Journal he was "of no party but that of mankind," he completed the great circle of his purpose. This we think is a sufficiently high mark for a man to aim at—Cultivation, Charity! Labour not for one being but for mankind! Not for Christ alone, but for the generating of the Christ-like in the world! We leave it to be admired—to be imitated. As for Hunt, his faithful inculcation of his cheerful belief consisted in its exercise: the Journal breathed such uniform gladness and hopefulness that every page is pervaded with an odour of homely sanctity, as of hidden violets: it is ever ministering sweet antidotes that can

> "Cleanse the stuffed bosom of that perilous stuff
> Which weighs upon the heart,"

and purge away the gross cares that bedim our eyes and render us insensible to the wonders and beauties that lie about our path, however humble and confined it may be. Whilst not a single ungraceful sentence drops from his pen there is not one that is ungracious.

Hunt more than fulfilled all his literary promises. One of the greatest difficulties connected with a periodical publication is the giving it some permanent characteristic appropriate to its appearance: a distinguishing feature commemorating its weekly, monthly, or quarterly birth—that will make readers regard the *time* of its issue, as well as its general nature. This is frequently set aside by editors as imposing a duty more onerous than the provision of the miscellaneous matter, whether that consists of

essays, novels, sketches, poetry, or even ponderous and imposing articles: it requires subjects that have to be industriously sought for, keenly discriminated, skilfully arranged, and, above all, handled with an equable catholicity, as well as being furnished with vigour and consistency, from number to number, through the ever-lengthening series. It is the administration of patriarchal government in periodical literature: a binding of the readers together into one family, and influencing them continuously by seasonable precept and example. Hunt did not shrink from the task: his dial of the year was commenced in the very first number—not in a frigid, formal way, as a thing that should be done and therefore had better be begun at once, but with sympathetic, intelligent joyfulness, so that the circle came to appear like that famous one which concludes Goethe's Tale of Tales, marked, "not in numbers, but in noble and expressive emblems,"—right pleasantly it

> "swept distemper from the busy day
> And made the chalice of the big round year
> Run o'er with gladness."

These regular articles called *The Week* looked abroad on nature; noticed the flowers when their timorous splendours peeped through the snow at the first impulse of life in the dark earth, and when, afterwards, as a mantle they spread their glory over garden and field; greeted the birds, from the lark's early carol, and the arrival of the swallows, until the woods became vocal with multitudinous voices. When the week includes the end of May and beginning of June, the journalist's ear catches the notes of Thomson's muse as she describes the Castle of Indolence, which possessed

> "A season *atween June and May*,
> Half prankt with spring, with summer half imbrowned,"

and he enters "the delicious nest," murmuring the music of the poem, and recalling Petrach and Milton: on Midsummer's

Night he dreams with Shakespeare: saunters through field-paths in July: from his famous *Hot Day* he enters the wet season of Saint Swithin, recalling the punster's promise "to lend his umbrella during the whole of the present *reign*": in September, "when woods are in the perfection of their woodiness, underwood and all," he goes forth with Gray, and enjoys nutting with a correspondent: in the same month he loses himself in a Garden-Elysium with Rousseau: and in October he rebukes himself for having previously said that the flowers were all going, for he sees "Cottages still covered with roses all over, *like household smiles.*" In *The Week* the best descriptions and remarks of other writers were appropriated and generally accompanied by genial commentaries of Hunt's own. The articles stretched through the first volume,—to adopt his words upon the writings of another lover of Nature,—"all adding beauty and luxuriance as they went, cropping fresh flowers, and noticing new objects": they formed a continuous wreath round the year, woven to the sound of a gladsome humanity.

With these breezy, balmy open-air excursions were combined memorials of the *Birthdays of Eminent Men*, which extended to the last days of the Journal: a series of brief biographical notices without example we believe for their beauty and terseness. "Immortal men never die," he said upon their introduction. "We must speak of them as they still exist among us, and not of their memories." Writing in this spirit; discerning only the permanent and best influences that the men have left, with an acute critical perception and unlimited command of felicitous language, his notices rival what Hazlitt called "the divine compliments of Pope." Always fully informed, with a style wonderful for its ardency, brevity and ease, he compels us to love the men as well as admire them. The notices may be called—biographies in a sentence. Thus he says of Fenelon—"A marvel of a man,—a courtier

yet independent, a teacher of royalty who really did teach, a liberal devotee, *a saint in polite life*;" Handel he calls—"The Jupiter of music"—he wielded "the choirs of heaven and earth together,"—"his hallelujahs open the heavens. He utters 'Wonderful' as if all their trumpets spoke together." In his Autobiography Hunt has expressed his early dislike to "the contradictions of historians in general," one particular reason being "their unphilosophic and ridiculous avoidance (on that score), of personal anecdote." In these *Birthdays* he has afforded some of the happiest instances of the converse treatment—namely, exhibiting the quintessence of a man's character, influence or powers by a single well-defined incident. This is generally done in the concluding sentence, as a summary and epitaph of love. Thus of Cardinal Alberoni, who once told a boy to fear nothing, not even God himself, and on the company looking shocked and astonished, he added, with a meek air and softened voice—'For we are to feel nothing towards the good God but *love*:'" of Fenelon, that the famous Lord Peterborough said of him, in his lively manner—"He was a delicious creature. I was obliged to get away from him, or he would have made me pious:" of Moliére, "It was he that gave a piece of gold by mistake to a beggar, and upon the man's returning it to him, exclaimed, 'Oh Virtue! in what a corner hast thou niched thyself.'"—Nor was Hunt wrong. In the unvarnished anecdote we have the spirit of a man unconsciously writing his autobiography. Under the treatment of a master-hand like that of Hunt, bent only on spreading abroad "the charities that soothe, and heal, and bless," the anecdote becomes a presentment of true greatness: and he made these *Birthdays* the noblest of all bead-rolls for the year—a veritable saints' calendar, which not only pleases, but stimulates to good deeds, which is the prime end of all mental endeavour.

In the second volume of the Journal the *Week* was illustrated with flowers from the poets, for the execution of which none

was better qualified than the editor, and, subsequently, on the year's biography being completed, he produced from several sources lively *Personal Portraits of Eminent Men*, with short introductory remarks by himself.

Simultaneously with the *Week* and *Birthdays* appeared the well-known *Romances of Real Life*. These are not merely brief sensational histories. They yield legitimate interest on that ground: but their chief value lies in the genial moralities which accompanied each of them. They were not indiscriminate appropriations, bad or good, according to the material or leisure at his disposal—but choice selections from an exhaustless store: not the production of paste and scissors—but the result of a fine intelligence which perused, pondered upon, and poetised them. They began with the first number, and ended only with the last.

In this manner did Hunt execute the systematic portion of his labours: and with such delighted earnestness, too, that he became attached to the very day of its performance. On the union of the Journal with the *Printing Machine*, the forfeiture of the old day of publication (Wednesday) gave him a pang. This was partly for old acquaintance sake, he said,—referring to the *Indicator* and the *Tatler*—and partly because Lamb said that the former made—"Wednesday the sweetest in the week." But with his "cheerful religion" Hunt subdued the sigh, and framed genial reasons for the change.

The antipodes to the method required for the management of a journal may be said to exist in the Communications from Correspondents. The torment of an editor's life—the Valley of Hinnom which he needs must enter, and there go through fire of his own kindling—whatever discursions he may find leisure to make into valleys green and lands of promise—is, the letter-box. Through that ordeal Hunt passes with hair unsinged and radiant countenance. No author has so fully identified himself with his readers. There is a frank

confidential tone in all his writings. They are speech in print: conversation without talk. There is a social fireside tone in Lamb: in Hunt it becomes more transcendent. We have him speaking in "the large luxury of his easy chair and slippers:" but we have him, also, strolling about, or looking out of the windows in all sorts of weather: he rambles not only amongst his books but through the garden and country lanes. This light, open-hearted communicativeness is displayed in all its fulness in his weekly numbers. His readers are his friends. "We claim," he says, "the familiar intimacy of the Reader in this our most private-public journal." And he makes good his claim by writing articles for him: criticising for him: extracting the best and greatest things in literature for him, and having, withal, an ear for all his garrulousness. He is, indeed, the hierophant of the Correspondence Column. Those who are interested in such business should study him carefully to find how its mysteries may be rendered as pleasant as hunt-the-slipper or blackberrying. They should note his pretty self-wrangling at not being able to do justice to each and all of his letter-writers, according to his impulses and affection: how persistently he climbs up the ever-climbing waves of the sea of his correspondence; now sinking gracefully back from his Leander-task, and anon pressing towards the "light of love, the only star he hails above"—the unapproached and unapproachable Hero who desires his notice: how enchantingly he frames his excuses at a horrible crisis,—"Instead of being able to fetch up our arrears to our correspondents, *as promised last week*, the key of the closet which *contained* their papers has been fairly walked off with, and will not return to us till too late for the press": how smilingly he stands in the confessional to acknowledge his shortcomings, yet with the same breath demands "pleasant absolution," on the ground that, "we would insert every letter sent us, if mere inclination to meet the wishes of the writer could settle such a matter:

and we have often had communications which we should have inserted with pleasure for their own sakes, had our room permitted"; how, at last, brought to his knees in "a delighted penitence," he gives a complete article on *Correspondence*, and whilst vowing that some flowers enclosed in one of the letters, "now lie before us, fragrant still, though they have been plucked for weeks," the elegant but dangerous compliment stirs his imagination which instantly conjures up a butterfly on whose back the article hies away with Spenser's Clarion o'er "all the country wide;" thenceforward he luxuriates on the "full measures of sweet poësy," listens "to the Italians singing their beautiful words," watches Milton's

> "Many a youth and many a maid
> Dancing in the chequered shade,"

and fairly embalms his correspondents in the most honied language.

He never uttered a complaint in this matter. So far from it, he solicited the continuance of the epistles whatever their worth or worthlessness, whether they brought new contributions or made remarks upon his own.

In his simple-hearted egotism he owned that he had pleasure in re-perusing an article which a reader praised; or, as he pertly phrases it, to "read it by the glad light of companionship." Were ever correspondents with such humour wooed, were ever correspondents with such humour won?

Hunt's parleying with readers is indeed charming—and certainly it is strikingly original, as it is the nearest approach we have to the real presentation of an author's personality—it is the pre-Raphaelitism of literature—bringing out the living man with every detail of himself and his surroundings. One bright result of this warm-hearted intercommunicativeness was the fertilising of his readers' minds: the implantation of seed thoughts: the breathing of vernal impulses—which produced

contributions that sought his mild patronage. Of course these were of all qualities: some were to be gently deprecated: some yielded only extracts; but others were worthy of the place they found in the columns beside the articles of their master. Many, indeed, were in some respects equal to his own. There is a letter on *Shopping* in the eighth number, written with observation and taste that might refine and instruct ladies at this hour: a description of *A Practical Joke*, which would have delighted Walter Scott; a song called *Betty Bolaine* which has a musical melancholy not unworthy of Goldsmith: an article on *Your Address*, containing a passage that might have been written by Richter: *Reminiscences of a Journey*, combining the humourous particularisation of Dickens with Hunt's own poetic perception: sonnets by *T. C.* which are the best imitations of Wordsworth we have seen: a sonnet on *Columbus*, by that many-visaged person *A Reader*, which is a fit companion to the famous one by Christopher North to *The Evening Cloud*: and the most natural of all *Table-Talk* by Bookworm.

Unique in his management of the home affairs of the Journal, we have now to regard Hunt's relations with the world at large. And first we shall notice the most delicate. To praise the mighty names that are registered in the volume of fame is a customary and stale observance—although it is much to dispense their stores in a judicious and graceful manner to homes which they have not before entered—but it is something bold and noble to speak with discreet admiration of the merits of associates and contemporaries: and this was so eminently done by Hunt that it might almost be said to be his vocation. Thus when Carlyle was fighting his up-hill battle for a proper recognition of the Weimar sage, we find Hunt, on his first perusal of the new translation by Carlyle, hailing Goethe as a new star, "wise in his generation and yet possessing the wisdom of the children of light," and giving to Carlyle's rendering of *Wilhelm Meister* "our reason, our imagination, our tears." At the

outset he contests certain positions which he believes to be assumed by Goethe, but in the next number he expresses his determination to "become more thoroughly acquainted with the writings of the great German writer," and frankly owns that his previous assumptions of defect in him may have arisen from some defect in himself—"we gladly" he says, "drop our eyelids under the effulgence of his beams." A splendid type we take this to be of the true way in which a man should recognise, even as he may hope to be recognised. Then we have his numerous acts of beautiful homage to his former contemporaries and friends: to Shelley, in the same article (but he always apothëosises his poet-friend!): his glowing recollection of Keats, when regretting that Christopher North had not known him: his reference to Hazlitt, in his article on *Amiableness superior to Intellect*, and, on another occasion, to Hazlitt's renunciation of spirituous stimulants.—It is one of the most pathetic incidents in literature that in the same number in which he commenced the reprint of Hazlitt's *Characters of Shakspeare's Plays*, he had to note the passing away of their common friend Charles Lamb. His remarks upon the event are a genial tribute from one who was equally a companion and an admirer. With fine judgment he at once placed Elia's habits in a right light, which would have saved the gentle essayist's memory from stupid misconception, had it been an object with those who propagated it to know the true state of the case. His estimate of Lamb's writings was given in a single line, which at once particularises their merits and the peculiar immortality that awaited them—"His essays will take their place among the daintiest productions of English *wit-melancholy*." As might be expected, following numbers of the Journal were enriched by choice specimens of Elia's *Wit, Humour, and Criticism*.—So alert was Hunt's eye to perceive all contemporary worth, and his heart to utter all it felt upon it, that although *Fraser's Magazine* was

then notorious for its frequent scurrilous sketches of eminent men, its offensiveness did not prevent his fixing upon, and re-producing from its pages, with remarks of admiration, the grandest, although one of the briefest, products of Carlyle's pen—his monody on his great friend Irving. He hailed, too, Bentham (who was so opposite to him in many points), when he uttered his deep, happiness-building sentences, and reprinted them in the Journal with delighted eagerness. He brought forth drops of honey-dew from the stern and stately pine of the utilitarian philosophy, as, when its founder enjoined "The pursuit of pleasurable thoughts," or affirmed that "Every man has a plastic gift of happiness, which will become stronger with use;" or that "The habit of happy thought will spring up like any other habit:" and, throughout the whole of the Journal, Hunt re-produced extracts from "Deontology," without any remarks of disparagement or condescension, but just as though its hard-thinking author was, like himself, the preacher of a soft and cheerful religion. When Hugh Miller's *Legends and Scenes of the North of Scotland* appeared, Hunt at once pronounced a high eulogium upon him, declaring that he was "a remarkable man, who will infallibly be well-known," and making his assertion good by lengthy extracts from the book, wherein the best passages were italicised with his usual loving care. Then we have his idolatry of Edwin Landseer. Although Hunt as an art-critic was not so subtle in perception as Hazlitt, who was nine-tenths of a painter in dexterity of the pencil—and fully one in the law and the imagination which are the body and soul of the art,—yet had Hunt, as we have previously observed, a devotional regard for pictures as well as other beauteous objects; and when a picture did impress him there were few that could as cunningly limn it in appropriate language. Our great animal painter caught him in the magic web of his colours, and Hunt frankly acknowledged his sway. On noticing his contribution to the Exhibition of the British Institution

of 1835 Hunt declared that of all the artists our island has fostered—"None has made such use of his apprenticeship, none has so completely learned his craft; none is so worthy of the title of 'Master,' as Edwin Landseer. Everything worked by his hand is not an attempt successful, *it is an intention fulfilled . . . Difficulty with him is a forgotten evil*,"—which we take to be one of the most felicitous explications ever given of that subtle word *genius*. Later in the year at the Exhibition of the Royal Academy he again renews his reverence, and describes Landseer's *Scene in the Grampians —The Drover's Departure* in a striking, picturesque manner as became a Landseer of the pen, concluding abruptly in pretty hopelessness of being able to do justice to the miracle of art—"It is alike wonderful in parts, and in the whole." Of course Hunt, as we have said, had obtained an exceptional position by the time he undertook the Journal, from his long and various experience, and his previous connection with minds that achieved the highest position in literature: nevertheless we find in him no mean assumptions: he is free from all narrowness; he is fearless and outspoken in his appreciation of merit of every kind: and it cheers us, strengthens one's hopes in humanity, to find a man after discovering, as he says, "that the best thing in an author is the love of what is apart from him," steadfastly acting up to the generous disclosure and ever ready to render such memorable appreciation as we have quoted—not, after the common fashion, over the dust of those who have become part and parcel of the mighty past, and beyond the reach of rivalry and hate—but of those who compete for the glory of the living hour, and who confirm the equity of the praise by the immortality they attain.

In his amenities on a humbler plane we find our journalist just as consistently cordial, commendatory and encouraging. In his article introducing Landor's magnificent *Ode to Joseph Ablett* (to which, by the way, he sped to give the earliest

publicity, and this particular article is upon its subsequent amplification) he refers to the invitations that were not possible for him to accept, amongst which was Landor's own to revisit *Maiano's Hill*, and one from *A.D.* whom he designates "one of the men we love best in the world." Now the opening article of No. 62 *(Pleasure, Pain, and Knowledge)* is based upon letters which he had received from a friend descriptive of a serious accident that the friend had sustained. Hunt in his article skilfully points the moral of such present mis-adventures, and exalts the manly fortitude with which they are endured "above all Greek, above all Roman fame." They come home to us; we all comprehend the matter perfectly, and are incited to do likewise. That friend, who afforded an example more soul-stirring than that of heroes, was, and is, quite unknown to the world at large: he was the *A.D.* of the invitation; and, in bolder presentation, Armorer Donkin, of Newcastle-upon-Tyne, to whom Hunt afterwards dedicated his *Legend of Florence.* We have, also, Hunt's efforts to show his generation the rare talents of his young friend Egerton Webbe, who was a wit, a scholar, and a musician. With much gentle solicitous praise he introduced Webbe to the readers of the Journal, and won their attention by a pathetic notice of his deafness, in contrast to his brilliant acquirements. Subsequently there appeared a series of papers by Webbe entitled *Horatiana*,—perhaps the gayest dissertation on the Roman poet ever indited by a loving disciple —and *Thoughts on Language*—a recondite, closely reasoned discourse, which affords ample grounds for the hopes of friendship and their ready prophecy that the writer shall raise for himself a lasting fame. Alas, Egerton Webbe's name appears destined to live only in the record of him by Leigh Hunt: with all his distinguished qualities and splendid epigrams, he has little more than the reputation of poor Yorick—"A fellow of infinite jest, of most excellent fancy!"

But it is Hunt's large-hearted enthusiasm which we admire

most in the case. With the first paper on *Horatiana* he gave the writer a jubilant welcome, and displayed a hilarious self-congratulation which entails with envious minds the charge of egotism. He daringly asserted that in his periodicals "it had been his good fortune to introduce more talent and genius to the public than any other. . . . Not only are the splendid names of Shelley and Keats in the list, . . . but many eminent ones in learning, in criticism, and in politics, now flourishing, began their career in the pages of the *Examiner* and the *Reflector*."

Here would be a favourable opportunity for enquiring into the nature of *egotism*—a charge which is hurled as a missile of offence not to be withstood, when every other faculty of critical malice has proved impotent. This, however, would be more appropriate on the consideration of the general works of Hunt; we, therefore, content ourselves at present with merely stating that he was justified in every syllable of his pretensions; and we rejoice that he could take such solace to his heart; he needed, as much as he deserved, it, for support against the afflictions he passed through—the persistent attacks of malignant tongues—the thick showers of fiery darts from the evil ones which fell upon him for so many years.

These pernicious experiences we must observe, do not, in the days of the Journal, in any degree warp its editor's judgment or restrain his candour. We see in Hunt a most open appreciator of his associates: a ready helper of young literary aspirants; and as to general contemporary merit—although he can only refer to the leading names incidentally, when they are suggested by subjects upon which he writes, he ever proves an intelligent and a charitable critic. We grant that he did not always temper his criticism with charity. But now it is so—and he subsequently rose to a far higher ground in his Autobiography, when he not only confirmed his old admiration, but healed the breaches caused in earlier years by

hasty opinions and estranging circumstances. These were his words—"How pleasant it is thus to find oneself reconciled to men whom we have ignorantly undervalued, and how fortunate to have lived long enough to say so!"

This brings before us another feature of the Journal, or rather of Hunt's character as manifested in it, namely, his special pleading on behalf of human infirmities. Not that he regarded idleness or viciousness with complacency: they have had no stronger denouncer than himself where they appeared persistent, or imbued with wicked intent; not ermine or gold with him could then palliate the enormity of any wickedness; and as for Industry he exalts it to the skies. He deprecates wailing, and all complaint at the unevenness of things; his law is to work and wait; to be miserable is indeed to be weak. Thus, with the singular power he exhibited on small and casual subjects, in noticing the first number of the *Musical Magazine*, he says,—"Public approbation and public support are not to be obtained for the asking: they must be bought at an equivalent" and so forth: and to a correspondent he says—"You cannot do better than cultivate your taste, provided it be only the ornament of your leisure, and interfere with no duty of certainty. Even the greatest poets, when they begin life, have no right to reckon upon their genius alone. . . . The great poet must often work like other men for a subsistence, and be content (as he well may) with his enjoyment of his beautiful fancies, and his prospect of fame." But whilst bestowing faithful advice like this he is still a royal counsellor holding a permanent brief from imperfect humanity: golden pleading is always falling from his lips: the feeble and the erring have always the ægis of his eloquence thrown over them. The eccentricities of genius, which so often lead to its prostitution and self-destruction, he construes into "a quick sense of the novelty and sufficiency of the moment, at the expense of all the future moments of life;" Cæsar's ambition

and crimes he extenuates (with something of satire, perhaps) as being possible agents in the working out of ultimate beneficence—"He put an end to his country's freedom, and did no good that we are aware of to anyone but himself, *unless by the production or prevention of results known only to Providence*": Byron's poetic vices are sympathetically condoned on the ground that he had "the misfortune to be born in a rank that perplexed his aspirations, and of parents unfitted to develope his character." But the climax of his silky euphemisms was attained when he discovered reasons—not for himself, but for others—not writing: the first reason was being too ill—the second was being *too well*—thus pleasantly explained—"having so much enjoyment in the passing moment without trouble to get it, that anything else becomes an interruption."

Nor did he shrink from using the gay rhetoric of palliation when he made a notable slip himself, or found it desirable to slightly modify some of his previous arguments in order to relieve himself and his readers from the weight of the "super-incumbent hour." Thus when he discusses his *Breakfast* article, and it brings him face to face with anti-carnivorous ideas, he "would fain eat his lamb, and pity it too, which is puzzling." Carping readers would echo his words—"very puzzling!" for Hunt condemned fishing. However, eating lamb, with him, is quite another matter, and he peremptorily settles the question by the reflection that though the gentle creatures have the worst of it in the present case, their dinner-destiny obtains for them an elysian existence: they "lead pleasant flowery lives while they do live. Nor could they have had this taste of existence, *if they were not bred for the table.*" So again, when he is detected repeating the popular fallacy that "butchers are *wisely* forbidden to be upon the jury," he writes an article of recantation. Wisdom in this dilemma rises from legal institutions to breathe an ampler ether and diviner air: previously, he had a hard word for the man; now, matters

being reversed, there is double woe for the victim. The "sight of blood, and violence, and mortal pangs" which previously unfitted the butcher for one of the most responsible duties of a citizen, have now milder ministries and more cordial results. "There is cut-and-come-again in him: your butcher breathes an atmosphere of good living. The beef mingles kindly with his animal nature. He grows fat with the best of it, perhaps with inhaling its very essence;" and sheep and lambs must content themselves with the epicurean logic that they would not "crop the sweet grass so long, but for the brief pang at the end of it." As bearing most directly, however, on his autobiographical retractations, we would refer to his *Chat with the Magazines* of May, 1835 (which, furthermore, shows how easily he wrote something memorable, even in a random way). There, in his reference to Wordsworth, he recalls any misjudgment, and finely epitomises his mature thoughts on the greatest of metaphysical poets; and there, too, he confesses to his strong antipathy to Rabelais on first reading him, being replaced by growing wonder and delight as he persisted in his perusal, until he has famously to declare of the prodigious eating and drinking of the book, that it is as if—"Hunger and Thirst personified sate down to a feast of revelry, with Wit for their host."—But no one could make treaties of reconciliation like Leigh Hunt; in the Journal we have some—but in his Autobiography there are master-pieces.

The quotation on Rabelais is a fair instance of Hunt's occasional literary criticism: a sentence does the work of a chapter: it is as impressive and as easily carried in the mind as a proverb. Of the same nature is his affecting reminiscence of Sir Egerton Brydges's literary career, which, he says, "is like some long evening sigh over a barren moor, or through the ruins of an old castle:" also, his reference to O'Keefe, when speaking of the omissions in the *Songs of England and Scotland*, "There is even O'Keefe—a great omission in a song book.

His muse was as fresh as a dairy-maid;" which is the happiest impersonation possible of our English goddess of poetry. But he did not only frequent the highways of learning: he was ever and anon slipping away into bye-ways and odd corners, and bringing forward something curious. Thus, rummaging the recesses of a circulating library he came upon a book entitled *Beauties of St. Francis de Sales*, and forthwith he proceeded with affectionate hands to rub the dust from off the countenance of the "Gentleman Saint" (as he nominates him), and sent its beams into the dim, sick, money-seeking world. He, as usual, italicised all the best thoughts of the good man—and many there are, pure, and deep, spirit-searching and spirit-healing—and thus earnestly expressed his own yearnings—"Would to God there were but one Christian Church, and such men as Saint Francis de Sales were counted saints by everybody."

The custom of italicising striking passages has been more largely adopted by Hunt than by any other critic: yet if he was prodigal in it, his use was always to the best possible advantage—with him it is criticism without words, and generally more pregnant than a page of commentary. As he sought for and lingered upon good traits of character, so did he with beautiful and powerful lines, as though they alone should be seen, as though they redeemed and glorified all else. His sweet italics still further enhanced them, turning the foliage of the writer into glittering blossoms, that they might seduce the heart of the reader with their radiance and fragrance, and being therein received ripen into ambrosial fruit. The application of them culminated in his celebrated analyses of poems, and specimens of the English poets. The former of these were commenced in No. 9 of the Journal with Thomson's *Castle of Indolence*, when Hunt stated it to be his intention to go through some popular poem with his readers occasionally. The pressure of general duties prevented his early resumption of the task: in No. 20, on giving Landor's *Fæsulan Idyl*, he recurred to the

subject, and re-stated his purpose of bringing forth stores of extracts from poems "which are too beautiful to have attained their full popularity;" he was reminded of the subject by a reader in his twenty-first number, and at last on *St. Agnes' Eve* of 1835 he gave Keats's poem on the superstition connected with the day, with delicious annotations, and in the following June he commenced his *Characteristic Specimens of Chaucer.*

The poems, the notes, and the extracts were all re-printed in subsequent volumes. Pre-eminently they afforded material for *Imagination and Fancy*—a book which has no equal as regards the subtle examination of the elements of poetry. He is there a poet upon his own art—a lover at once analysing and apostrophising the charms of his mistress and his own emotions —an idolater combining work with worship in expounding at large the oracles of his divinities. The book cannot, certainly, create a poet, but it can refine the highest, teach the humblest to discriminate as to what is true poetry, and beget a rapture for it in the dullest soul. His Chaucer-specimens reappeared in the *Seer.* Indeed the Journal is not only a periodical; not merely a compendium of the choicest reading, equal in quantity to eight three-volume novels, and in quality to all the novels of our language, except those from some half-dozen master-hands, but it is, as we have already said, literally books within a book. The supplements called the *Streets of the Metropolis* are popular still in the shape of that best of all literary guide-books—*The Town:* the *Romances of Real Life,* formed a volume of their own. In the pages of the Journal we furthermore find the material of the future *Seer; or Commonplaces refreshed;* the whole of Hazlitt's *Characters of Shakspeare's Plays;* the quintessence of Elia's writings; germs of *Imagination and Fancy* (in addition to those we have noted), as, also, of the companion volume *Wit and Humour:* and the *Criticisms on Female Beauty,* which forms so considerable a part of *Men, Women, and Books.*

These latter papers, on a subject apparently remote from the circumscribed observation of a student of books, amaze us equally in regard to their copiousness, their precision in details, their delicacy and exactitude of judgment. Though fifty years of age, truly "the power of beauty he remembered yet": and he delineated it with the fervour of a lover and the nicety of an artist. And so was it, as we have remarked, with respect to Art itself: when anything touched his fancy or imagination it possessed him like a passion, and he expatiated upon it in the most apposite language. How fresh and earnest his observations on the May Water-Colour Exhibition:—"If water colours have not the force, the vigour, and the richness of oils, . . . they are more compact, and lie well for the eye. It is like park-scenery compared with the varying and larger grandeur of nature": then comes his appeal—"Here may the town-bound man of business cast his weary eyes over the scenes of distant lands, and, in one smiling, charming morn, obtain for his smoke-dimmed sight, the essence of a tour on the continent. . . . That refreshing shower of Cox's has moistened your brain: bathing in the vigorous sea of Fielding, you have braced your nerves: basking in Barrett's sun has warmed your wits: laughing at Hunt's humour has enlarged your philosophy, and given you an insight into character." With devotional enthusiasm he lingers before Painted Windows:—"They make us loth to speak of them, without stopping, and receiving on our admiring eyes the beauty of their blessing. They seem, beyond any other inanimate object, except the finest pictures by the great masters, (which can hardly be called such,) to unite something celestial, with the most gorgeous charm of the senses. The window must have us to itself, as in the rich quiet of a cathedral aisle." In poetic prose, which excels his verses upon the same subject, he lauds Paganini's "marvellous violin, which is now to be heard at the Adelphi, glorifying, praying, laughing, lamenting, making

love." And it should not be forgotten that he sounded the keynote of the present popularity of Piano-fortes by his article upon them (as well as by many wide-spread suggestions and words of encouragement); expressing his hope, that "the time may arrive, when every family that can earn its subsistence, shall have its piano-forte." His Orphic language upon the instrument was enough to awaken music in the heart, and produce desire for instant possession of the instrument. "It is a piece of furniture with a soul in it," he said. "Open, or shut, it is pleasant to look at: but open, it looks best, smiling at us with its ivory keys *like the mouth of a sweet singer*. . . It contains a whole concert in itself, for you may play with all your fingers, and then every finger performs the part of a separate instrument. In no single instrument, except the organ, can you have such a combination of sounds. *It is Jupiter unable to put off his deity when he visits you.* All these delicate ivory keys which repose in such evenness and quiet, wait only the touch of a master's hand *to become a dancing and singing multitude.*"

In such manner does our journalist delight us when he dwells upon special themes. But in his incidental sentences there is quite as potent a charm. By an accidental suggestion—a random thought, he surprises us with unexpected playfulness, sweetness, pathos or profundity, and throws us into pleasant or solemn moods. As for instance, when the intelligence came that on the interment of the widow of Burns the poet's body was found to be in a singular state of preservation, he incidentally remarks—"A corpse seems as if it suddenly knew everything, and was profoundly at peace in consequence:" when gazing forth from his window his visionary eye perceives, in "The commonest rain-drop on a pane of glass—a visitor from the solitudes of time;" when, three weeks later, he is gleaning a suggestion for an article from the scarlet-geranium that stood in the same window, his reflections are drawn into deep wonders—like Buffon's on the creation of Adam—"Suppose flowers themselves were new!"

he cries, "Suppose they had just come into the world, a sweet reward for goodness &c."—and his marvellings at their demonstration of beneficence and omnipotence are traced to a conclusion with a hand that is awed but does not tremble—"*because* Love sustains, and *because* the heart also is a flower, which has a right to be tranquil in the garden of the *All-Wise*:" when, as a manifesto upon the budding impulses of spring, he declares for the Journal, that—"we shall persist, as we have for these twenty years past, in keeping up a certain fragrant and flowery belief on the altars of May and June, in these sequestered corners of literature;" when, on introducing an extract from the *Penny Cyclopædia* on the Fine Arts, he breaks upon us with an assertion, musical and bewitching as if breathed from Prospero's isle—"*nothing* surely can surpass the power of an affecting and enchanting air in awakening the *very flower of emotion:*" when, with sly and sportive wit, he champions anniversaries like those of St. Valentine, as not to be abolished, any more than youth and love itself—and asks what would become of Cupid "if he were to go out of the valentines with their bleeding hearts, all stuck through with arrows?—*for he is now to be found nowhere else:*" and when he proclaims the ambition of the Journal—"We hope we shall be thumbed horribly, and carried about in pockets, like a love-letter, *or other certificate of merit.*"—Really, we are at a loss to point out a parallel to the dainty pardonable egotism that lurks under the fragrant umbrage of this periphrasis. The last clause of the sentence ought to be inscribed in the lexicon of Venus—"A Love-Letter, *sig.* A Certificate of Merit." The definition is a most exquisite combination of metaphysics and poetry.

Such quotations, however, precious as they are, and worthy of being kept in remembrance, must not be admired to the disparagement of the articles, or occasional observations from which they are taken. We have drawn forth pearls, rubies, and diamonds having great intrinsic value;—but they, also,

denote the richness of the store from which they are extracted: we refer to the pages themselves that the setting of the brilliant gems may be justly estimated;—it will be found of curious and exquisite workmanship, as well as metal of infinite worth.

We cannot dilate upon Hunt's articles, of which every number contains at least one—that is, some eighty in all. They are in every variety of method: from close reasoning on the subject before him, and enwreathing of the subject with lovely associations; to those where—entranced with its magic beauty—the winged association bears him away, and where the predominant fancy aroused by a name, or fine line, becomes a

> "sweet beguiling melody,
> So sweet we know not we are listening to it."

All of them are full of the writer's personality: instinct with his sole identity, his real self. Indeed since Montaigne, the father of us all, no essayist has been so truly personal as Hunt. We discern the individual man in every syllable. The autobiographical, of course, appears frequently, but it is not obtrusive; it comes only at the call of suggestion—when some circumstance summons an incident from his long and copious experience. Thus, when he recalls walking at Maiano with Landor, and the latter carrying one of the journalist's boys up the Fiesolan hill in his arms, "and turning on him a face which always brightens at the sight of children" (Landor's very look remained with the father): and his discussion regarding Malthus's *Essay on Population* with Coleridge: and his sight of Cumberland, the comic dramatist, walking along the street with an earnest countenance: and the finger of Galileo, preserved under a glass case in the middle of the Laurentinian library in Florence, "pointing to heaven, and now almost an object of worship with the descendants of those by whom he was persecuted:" and *the* "Twelfth Night" when a party of "celebrated wits, and poets, (of which he was one) as well as charming women" undesignedly continued their festivities until next morn's

breakfast, and "merged one glorious day into another, . . stamping a seal of selectness on the house in which it was passed;" and when (in his notice of Bishop Berkeley) he implies his wish that his departure from this life should be quiet, unexpected, and at home—"He had a happy death, expiring suddenly at the tea-table without a groan, while reclining on a sofa:" and when he murmurs his mother's frequent—"Come! let us think a little," at the hushing time of twilight. Reminiscences like these are not to be cavilled at: they enrich all writing when aptly introduced—they put the life of life into it. Hunt gives them unostentatiously, and with unfearing candour, and he must be treated after his own manner, liberally, and with hearts opening to his joyful cordiality, like purple crocuses to the first spring sunshine. Sneerers, those creatures who bring not with them the grateful seeing-eye, but in their vanity make themselves pu blind, will with him (as with all other things) know only—themselves. They must chew the cud of their own bitterness,—he provides none of the loathsome food they love. Readers must come seeking mild communion, must be of his own spiritual consistence, yearning to realise the matin-song of Christianity—"peace upon earth, goodwill towards men."

It is noteworthy that not until the incorporation of the Journal with the *Printing Machine* (in the close of its career), and only in the pages of the latter, did any hostile criticism appear. Once only do we discover a tincture of severity in all his six hundred pages: it is a simple sentence,—nay, only a word-satire hid in smiles. Fontenelle he epitomises as "a man of universal literature, chiefly known to *prosperity* as a popularizer of astronomy." Yet did he say it? Is it not the crowned monarch of errata? Has the printer's devil to be credited with mistaking the word for "posterity"? Nevertheless we are inclined to give Hunt the benefit of as cunning, clever, and biting a satire as ever dropped from the pen of Voltaire or Swift.

Hunt's royal ordinance, however, was that there was a sufficiency of the good and beautiful in literature for employment and admiration without time being wasted on what is inferior, unpleasant, or ridiculous: knowledge of good should be the aim and end of our studies—when the good is known you will not confound it with evil:—as for the rest, he lays it down in one of his articles that "the great art is to cultivate impressions of the pleasant sort, just as a man will raise wholesome plants in his garden, and not poisonous ones." In this cheerful, contented, Eden-seeking spirit he exhorts us (in his article on *Breakfast in Summer*), if locked in from fields and sunshine, to get a flower for the table, and if that is not to be conveniently obtained, then even "a branch of clover, or a handful of flowering grass, one of the most elegant as well as cheap of nature's productions,—and you have something on your table that reminds you of the beauties of God's creation, and gives you a link with the poets and sages that have done it most honour:" then he proceeds to tell us that Bacon was in the habit of having flowers on his table,—so here "is a fashion that shall last you for ever, if you please, never changing with silks, and velvets and silver-forks." Yet from these pleasant altitudes he hesitated not at the call of humanity, to descend into the lowest depths of our civilisation: to pass at once "from Spring flowers and the beauties of womankind" (for he was then giving his criticisms on *Female Beauty*) to miserable alleys and "the wretchedest of their sex": to peer into *Beggars' Lodging Houses*—not to verify the grotesque urbanities of a Gay's opera, but to expose the horrors and despairs of the place, and if possible send thither the ministers of helpful charity.

The charm of his articles thus does not lie alone in their ever-sparkling freshness, in the morning sweetness that pervades them, but in the largeness of their scope—in their consideration, according to the call of the moment, of all human needs. Hunt's was of the inquisitive and exploring order of minds:

industry and method he shared with hundreds of other literary workers—but he superadded (and therein lay his power) a genial humanity which looked on all things with an equal eye, moved towards all with a warm sympathising heart, and sought good in all things with a clear, trustful mind. His style was conversational picturesqueness, richness of ready learning, *plus* unfailing cordiality and communicativeness. If we had to state his power in a brief sentence it would be—the alchemy of intelligent loving-kindness.

The Journal, as a whole, forms one of the most prodigal banquets ever provided for amusement and intellectual culture. Yet no crude surfeit reigns in its admirably arranged diversity of subjects: each and every week has its own particular enjoyment: "the profitable years" are filled with entertainment and instruction blended with the finest judgment. Reading the numbers, as we have read them, after the labours of the day are done and all agreeable fancies need to be exercised, we realise true Arabian Nights. But this is not saying all that should be said. This Journal leavens our present literature, though the fact is little known, and less acknowledged. Writers are still amongst us whose intellects were informed and directed by its pages: the labours of many more are bestowed on fields of activity which, (unconsciously to them,) its author made intelligible for sources of use and beauty, and the benign impassionateness with which they are imbued greatly owes its literary parentage to him. Personal results could easily be ascertained if diligently sought for. Whilst we have been writing, a gentleman of high culture has acknowledged to us his obligations to the Journal for his poetical education. We are acquainted with other instances. Hunt's own appreciation of it was modest enough. In his Autobiography all he says when referring to it is, that he understands it is in request as a book for sea-voyages: and he avows that the comments on the *Romances of Real Life* contain

some of his best reflections. The book itself can speak more eloquently on his behalf. There is found in it matter that will stir every fine power of the soul—smiles, tears, deep thought, and devotion. It is a book that can be laid before the child, the lady, the poet, and the philosopher. It is a noble boast when an author can declare that he leaves not "one line which, dying, he could wish to blot": but it is tenfold higher praise when it may be said of him that he has not only left his multifarious writings pure—all misconceptions atoned for, all rash judgments corrected—but that in the immense mass of charming selections that he has made and commented upon over a long period of time, there is not one sullied by temper, pruriency, or factiousness. This can be faithfully said of Hunt's. Their range includes the fruits of all intellects, of all forms of human endeavours: from the sayings of children to those of the wisest of the sons of men: from instances of domestic magnanimity to the heroic achievements in art, science, and public strife—and each and all convey the most ennobling lessons. Hunt has been praised by Christopher North, Talfourd, Lytton, Dickens, Carlyle, Gilfillan, and a host of other eminent names. We have not, however, dwelt upon this Journal in a special manner to justify any well-grounded opinions, whatever value others may put upon them, but because we love the glorious folio for its own sake, and, because, that in addition to other great merits, it is of the Prime Exemplars of Periodical Literature for fulness, variety, ease, elegance, enthusiasm, and urbanity.

NOTES.

"*Some of the most charming essays,*" page 9.

"Let me console myself a little by remembering how much Hazlitt, and Lamb, and others, were pleased with the *Indicator*. . . . Hazlitt's favourite paper (for they liked it enough to have favourite papers), was the one on *Sleep*. . . . Lamb preferred the paper on *Coaches and their Horses*, that on the *Deaths of Little Children*, and (I think), the one entitled *Thoughts and Guesses on Human Nature*. Shelley took to the story of the *Fair Revenge;* and the paper that was most liked by Keats, if I remember, was the one on a hot summer's day, entitled *A Now*. He was with me while I was writing and reading it to him, and contributed one or two of the passages. . . . Lord Holland, I was told, had a regard for the portraits of the *Old Lady* and the *Old Gentleman*, &c., which had appeared in the *Examiner*."—Autobiography, vol. ii., p. 215.

"*The Story of Rimini,*" page 9.

The poem appeared in 1816. It was dedicated to Lord Byron. Thomas Moore wrote of it,—"There is that maiden charm of originality about it—that *integer, illibatusque succus*, which Columella tells us the bees extract—that freshness of the living fount, which we look in vain for in the bottled-up Heliconian of ordinary bards; in short, it is poetry." Charles Lamb said—"The third canto is in particular my favourite;" and punningly continued, "we congratulate you most sincerely on the trait of your prison fruit." Lytton Bulwer called it—"A tale of impulse and power from the beginning to the end, discovering at times a delightful play of fancy. . . . The poet must have felt all the beauty he so exquisitely describes; but the human interest in the poem is its mightiest charm."—Considering our limited space, these quotations must suffice as to the estimation of *Rimini* by those best qualified to judge on matters of poësy.

Foliage, page 9.

Foliage; or Poems, original and translated, appeared in 1818.

"*Who fought and suffered,*" page 9.

The article for which Leigh and John Hunt were indicted appeared in the *Examiner* of the 22nd March, 1812. For it they underwent two years' imprisonment, and were each fined five hundred pounds. The title of the article was *The Prince on St. Patrick's Day.* When referring to the case in his Autobiography, Hunt said—"It is understood, after all, that the sting of the article lay not in the gravest portion of it, but in the lightest: in the banter about the 'Adonis' and the corpulent gentleman of fifty." (Vol. ii., p. 131.) Hunt's prison life is too well known for us to mention any particulars regarding it. His cell became a literary audience-chamber. Genius of all powers and persuasions visited him—from Bentham to Byron. As to the effect of his religious talisman, of which we afterwards speak, we give the sweetest application of it, by Miss Martineau, in her *Life in a Sick Room.* "If a healthy man, entering upon a temporary imprisonment, hangs his walls with a paper covered with roses, and everyone sympathises in this forethought for his mind's health, much more should the invalid, (who, though he must be a prisoner, has yet liberty of choice where his prison shall be,) provide for sustaining and improving his attachment to Nature, and for beguiling his sufferings by the unequalled refreshments she affords."—Page 44.

"*His extensive and varied reading,*" page 9.

To look through the many volumes of periodicals identified with Hunt's name, and observe the endless stream of books which come under his notice to extract from, to comment upon, or to review, recalls the labours of the Titans of erudition—such as Bayle, Burton, Allibone. Those methodised their great reading according to the objects that they had in view. Hunt used the larger part of his to lighten and diversify his periodicals. Instead of groaning with Burton over the results of such laborious days, he would have uttered his words merrily—"A thing of meere industrie: a collection without wit or invention; a very toy!" Other portions of his reading assumed a higher form: they illustrated each other: combined to deal with some special subject. His articles are never heavy with learning. Its presence is felt: but the embroidery of imagination, fancy, and humour prevents its being harshly palpable to the eye—for Hunt had, indeed, a share of that divine gift extolled by Spenser in *The Shepheards Calender.* "as not to be gotten by labour and learning, but adorned with both."

For the readiest verification of our assertions we would refer to Hunt's Essay on *My Books,* which appeared as the LXXVII. and LXXVIII. numbers of *The Indicator*—in the first and second numbers of the *Literary Examiner,* July, 1823. We cannot resist quoting the mid-most paragraph of

that Essay, as containing the true spirit with which a modern writer should be imbued :—"I love an author the more for having been himself a lover of books." The conclusion of his examples on that head he winds up with, probably, the most bookish sentence ever written :—"How pleasant it is to reflect that all these lovers of books have themselves become books." Therein lurks the desire of his own heart for a bookish immortality—of which on many grounds he is well worthy.

"*Requirements and his household affections,*" page 9.

The value of a man's life chiefly consists in the manner in which he bears vicissitude—detraction, poverty, and pain. Hunt's domestic troubles are made sufficiently evident in the first volume of his *Correspondence*. We shall only here dwell on one or two points for the sake of illustration—and for the encouragement of those who likewise suffer. In 1808, when he is surrounded by the purple light of love, he writes, "I am determined . . . to be perfectly clear of the world, and ready to meet the exigencies of a married life, before I do marry, for I will not see a wife, who loves me and is the comfort of my existence, afraid to speak to me of money matters: she shall never tremble to hear a knock at the door, or to meet a quarter-day: she will tremble, I hope, with nothing but love and joy in the arms of her husband."—*Correspondence*, vol. i., p. 41. Sixteen years afterwards when Hymen has crowned his marriage with lusty honours, he thus writes to his wife's sister, "If I could only secure bread for my children after my death, and think your sister would be happy . . . I feel often as if I could retire to a lone corner, and die at once, out of gratitude."—*Correspondence*, vol. i., p. 229. During this interval occurred his imprisonment, namely, in 1813. He there comforted his heart with a line from Spenser,

"Much dearer be the things which come through hard distresse:"

and illumined his intellect with the *Parnaso Italiano*, which he then purchased. Of the latter he said that it was sunshine on his shelves: and when he went to Italy he took it with him. Now in his dark years this collection of Italian poetry, which was so precious to him, had to be considered as representing so much provision for household needs, and he writes—"I gave, many years ago, £30 for it, at least—I am told several pounds more. . . . I ask half of the above sum—£15." Yet was he not utterly cast down under his misfortunes! nay, under their heaviest accumulation he was ever benign and content. When death darkened his chambers, and discord divided certain near relationships, he could write upon the event and to the opposing one—"There is nothing worth contesting here below, except who shall be the kindest."—The first indication

with Goldsmith of his emergence from pecuniary difficulties was the extravagance of his dress: he dawned upon his friends a gaudy, luminous fop in suit of "Tyrian bloom, satin grain, and garter blue silk breeches." The return of a humble prosperity to Hunt was marked by something after the same manner, but in a milder form—the simple possession of a coat. In 1835 he communicated the important fact to three friends in the following terms—"Let me tell . . . in the most private corner of your triumvirate ear that I have at length got a coat to my back, and can have the face to join his (Talfourd's) friends." Mark that that coat came to Hunt when he was busy with the subject of our paper—the *London Journal*. In time, things improved—he received more of the world's money for his labours, "he moved to higher ground," said his son, that is he removed from Chelsea to Kensington, and, in fact, the improvement was so great that he was in danger of attaining the Buddhistic Nirvana. He did attain the literary counterpart of that blessed condition. "And what a beatitude, to find myself, at last, actually paying as I go, and incurring no more bills! . . . . All this seats me on a very flourishing hill-top of security and self-complacency,

'Above the smoke and stir of that dim spot,'

which men call dunning."—Hunt at length got a pension. But the beatitude bore fruit before that arrived. He wrote in 1846, "I found myself enabled yesterday to give a few shillings to a poor man in charity, a luxury that I have not had—God knows how long, and I seemed in consequence to sit on my chair taller and nobler. Such tendencies have human beings to mount on little molehills." The pension came in 1847. It was nothing to sing pæans about: it was not a fair interest on the loss he sustained by his imprisonment, setting aside the return of the principal: nevertheless, Hunt did sing aloud for joy when it was given to him.—As for the rest, he was the same equable being with his moderate, but secure income; and fulfilled in his mild prosperity what he taught and acted upon in the sharp days of adversity.—These facts are enough for the purpose of this note. He himself, when afterwards writing his Autobiography, summed up his *Conclusions from Sufferings* thus, "Evil itself has its bright, or at any rate its redeeming side: probably it is but the fugitive requisite of some everlasting good. . . . It is the pain that prevents a worse, the storm that diffuses health, the plague that enlarges cities, *the fatigue that sweetens sleep*, the discord that enriches harmonies, *the calamity that tests affections, the victory and the crown of patience, the enrapturer of the embraces of joy.*"

"*If indexed according to his suggestion in another work,*" page 10.

We refer to the article in *The Indicator* of October 4th, 1820, *Upon*

Indexes. After speaking of the dryness of making them, he concludes—"But as grapes, ready to burst with wine, issue out of the most stony places, like jolly fellows bringing Burgundy out of a cellar; so an Index, like the *Tatler's*, often gives us a taste of the quintessence of the humour."

"*The loving light that has saved us,*" page 11.

Probably Hunt here refers to the Hypochondria which afflicted him for above six years, when of all times, and to a dreaded extent, he felt

"the burthen and the mystery
Of all this unintelligible world,"

and upon which he framed his *Conclusions from Sufferings*. He there says that even amidst his sufferings he was remarkable for cheerfulness—"which will retain a sort of heaven round a man, when everything else might fail him."

His experience was analogous to that of Coleridge, who said:—"For one mercy I owe thanks beyond all utterance, that, with all my gastric and bowel distempers, *my head hath ever been like the head of a mountain in blue air and sunshine.*" Which figure seems unwittingly borrowed from Goldsmith's *Deserted Village*. Yet who shall say that Goldsmith was original in his use of the figure? Emerson, as the latest exponent of borrowed thought,—a matter that largely concerns himself—correctly considers that such appropriation comes from magnanimity and stoutness, and affirms that a great man quotes bravely and will not draw "on his invention when his memory serves him with a word as good." We suppose the simile of the bright and serene mountain-top has been seized by the brave spirit of poësy and poetic-prose ever since Homer sang of the divine Olympus, on which was neither wind nor rain, nor clouds, but an eternal spring.

"*A Loving Belief,*" page 12.

Mr. J. T. Fields, in his *Old Acquaintance*, remarks of Hunt, "In his bare cottage at Hammersmith the temperament of his fine spirit heaped up such riches of fancy that kings, if wise ones, might envy his magic power.

'ONWARD IN FAITH, AND LEAVE THE REST TO HEAVEN,'

was a line he often quoted."

Hunt's religion may be said to have rested on that mighty rock with which Paul at once smote down "the middle wall of partition" (Eph. ii. 14) and afforded an immoveable foundation for the Church Universal. "For in Jesus Christ neither circumcision availeth anything, nor uncircumcision; *but Faith which* WORKETH *by Love.*" (Galatians v. 6.)

"*Who thoroughly understands anything, even to the flowers at his feet?*" page 12.

Probably when writing this Leigh Hunt's mind went back to the day when he heard Coleridge under the Grove at Highgate, his voice undulating in a stream of music as he "built up a metaphor out of a flower, in a style surpassing the famous passage in Milton: deducing it from its root in religious mystery, and carrying it up into the bright, consummate flower, 'the bridal chamber of reproductiveness.'"—(Autobiography, vol. ii. p. 228.) Coleridge has beautifully dilated upon the same subject in his *Aids to Reflection*, Comments on Aphorisms, VI. and XXXVI.

Strange it may seem that the same illustration should be used by Tennyson for his master-piece of mystic-poetry.

> "Flower in the crannied wall,
> I pluck you out of the crannies;—
> Hold you here, root and all, in my hand,
> Little flower—*but if I could understand*
> *What you are, root and all, and all in all,*
> *I should know what God and man is.*"

Yet, perhaps, not strange after all, since this is a fundamental illustration, and will suggest itself to any mind that seriously ponders on the Mystery of Being. Swedenborg, by whose light all nature's arcana must be read, spoke of it to enforce his spiritual doctrine. "Nature of herself can do nothing, but God is the sole operator by and through Nature. . . . Let man but attend . . . from a small seed sown in the ground there is emitted a root, and by means of the root a stem, and afterwards branches, buds, leaves, flowers and fruit, till at length new seeds are produced *by such a regular process, as if the first seed was acquainted with all the orderly steps and successive stages through which it must pass to its self-renewal in the second seed.* . . . The Vegetative Soul, which reigns universally in the inmost ground of every particle of juice, or in its prolific essence, is *derived purely from the heat of the spiritual world.*"

"*Had we possessed but two or three senses,*" page 12.

He speaks in the same article of phenomena, at present unmanifest to us, of which we should become aware, with the help of but one sense more. Writing to Charles Ollier (7th December, 1853), the same thought is presented again. "Beautiful possibilities, thank God, are endless. We have only to imagine new senses connected with invisible substances—and the senses may be innumerable, and the substance as imponderable as you please. Consciousness is all that is required, *and Love.*" The thought, however, had not slumbered for these eighteen years. He had, once in

the while at least, during that period brooded upon it, and in a mirage of prophecy created a heaven out of this earth through these "beautiful possibilities." In the *Seer* (in the article entitled *Sunday in London*), he had the vision of the accomplishment of the days when mankind shall on this sphere behold and rejoice in

"All Earth can take or Heaven can give."

"LOVE," he said, "is a perpetual proof that something good, and earnest, and eternal is meant for us. . . . And when the world has realised what Love urges it to obtain, perhaps Death will cease; and all the souls which Love has created, crowd back at its summons to inhabit their perfected world."

"*Perhaps they are now this minute in the room*," page 13.

To the end this was Hunt's fond surmise. Twenty-three years after he had written the above, opening his mind to a friend on the same subject, he said:—"I confess I often feel it highly probable that the spirits of my own beloved dead are in the room with me, and that they feel a special Heavenly pleasure by seeing that I do so, and by knowing the comfort it gives me. I count this no kind of madness, *but one of the heights of reason*." At the same time he repudiated what is called "Spiritualism" with all its self-refuting vulgarities and absurd inventions.

"*A cheerful religion*," page 13.

These words are Hunt's own. To the light thrown upon them by previous notes, we would add a few more gleams from different sources. His *Religion of the Heart* we consider the weakest of all Hunt's productions. As a whole it falls below his most casual articles. It is far from rising to the height of the great argument of its title: and it lacks the coherence, the method, and the sustained elevation required in a manual of devotion, for which he partially intended it. It recalls, and exhibits its imperfections in thus recalling, as a test and standard, some of the most exalted productions of the human mind, aye, and of some of England's own brightest souls, in connexion with divine service, public and private. There are nevertheless in it beautiful and inspiriting passages, and we remark one in the preface, wherein he sets forth Cheerfulness as a part of his Piety—"flowing from the same tendency to love and admire; and if anybody question me further, and ask whether in other respects (than writing), I practise what I preach, I answer, that I profess but to be a disciple in my own school; that some of its injunctions are harder to me than they will be to many; and that *I pray daily for strength not to*

disgrace them." Upon the inauguration of a monument to Hunt's memory on October 19th, 1869, in Kensal Green Cemetery, Lord Houghton, who pronounced the address, had naturally to refer to this phase of Hunt's character. His lordship did not, however, find Hunt's words sufficient for his purpose, and therefore, used an expression of his own. "Obloquy and injustice," his lordship said, "never for a moment soured the disposition or excited a revengeful feeling in the breast of this good man, who had as it were—I have no other phrase for it—*a superstition of good.*" As for ourselves, we rather find in Hunt a starry example of some of the grandest lines penned since Milton sang—and as they were written during his own youth, he possibly did unconsciously mould his life to them. We refer to Wordsworth's *Lines composed a few miles above Tintern Abbey.* Hunt's words are but an adaptation of the conclusion of the poem, when Nature's high-priest makes his declaration of the

> "CHEERFUL FAITH! THAT ALL WHICH WE BEHOLD
> IS FULL OF BLESSINGS."

Historians and personal anecdote," page 17.

Isaac Disraeli—who in his literary tastes and perceptions, and his unremitting application, strongly resembled Hunt—also, saw the primary importance of Anecdotes. He even wrote a dissertation upon them, wherein he insisted on their affording the best material for knowledge of manners and the characters of eminent men, and that by them we become generally acquainted with human nature. His son has made human nature his especial study, and of course the management of Anecdote has not been unobserved by him. He has at least once ironically marked the distinction between its literary and social use. In the one it illumines, raises, and supports a subject; in the other it usually usurps the functions as well as fills the voids of mental intercourse. In the preface to *Lothair* he declares, with more than patrician pride, "I was born in a library," as though, his eye hailing in the distance the golden top of political sovereignty and the gleaming coronet with which his brows should be bound withal, he would do homage in that boastful moment to the truth of his father's words, "Literature is an avenue to Glory." In the novel itself—out of the library—in the gross atmosphere of common talk, he ventriloquises through one of his characters, "When a man falls into his anecdotage it is time for him to retire from the world."

"*Wednesday the sweetest in the week,*" page 18.

Wednesday was Lamb's red-letter day. On the evening of that day his home was free for all his acquaintances. Hazlitt has been the historiographer of those evenings in the *Plain Speaker*, and in his essay *On Persons*

one would wish to have seen, in The New Monthly Magazine, 1826. A description of them will be found in Hazlitt's life by W. C. Hazlitt, c. xviii., entitled "Lamb's Wednesdays;" in Barry Cornwall's Memoir of Lamb, p. 141, *et seqq.*; and in Talfourd's Letters of Lamb, part ii. p. 9. Lamb's feeling for the day is clearly exhibited when he writes to Hunt (*Correspondence*, vol. i. p. 108) to say that his sister's indisposition prevented their visiting Hampstead, and pathetically dates the note—"*Indifferent Wednesday*, 1821." Hunt ever preserved a deep regard for the consecrated day; nay, he even re-inspired it in his later years, and effected an affectionate metempsychosis—attaching to the celebration another Charles. In 1857 we find him thus referring to his renewal of the old custom in a letter to Charles Ollier, "Are there to be no Wednesdays this summer, or rather no Ollierdays, for you know how the list of the week-days used to run—Monday, Tuesday, Ollierday, Thursday, &c."

"*There is a social fireside tone in Lamb*," page 19.

With all his love for the streets, Lamb's writings have the air of snug comfort in them. They do themselves give us the assurance that he has been cosily encased within four walls, with warm feet and softly-flowing fancies that are not disturbed nor accelerated by the bustle or noise through which it is such high felicity for him to wander. Even when he finds time to write epistles in the India House, wearing the yoke of the Philistines, and subjected to occasional interruptions, his mind breathes the still air of delightful sequestration. "How cool I sit in this office," he wrote to Wordsworth: "with no possible interruption further than what I may term *material* (that is, not metaphysical). . . . Just now within four lines, I was called off for ten minutes to consult dusty old books for the settlement of obsolete errors. I hold you a guinea you don't find the chasm where I left off, so excellently the wounded sense closed again and was healed."—Never do we discover in Lamb's style anything of the hurry of the Strand, the throng of Fleet Street, the jostling of Cheapside, the clang and crush of the Poultry, or "the blended noises" of Holborn. Edged off from "the sweet security of the streets," which he praises so highly; within a retreat islanded apart from the great thoroughfares, though within hearing of their busy hum—its windows looking into a quiet Court, in which there is a pump and certainly trees; his household gods established in permanent happiness, without regret or fear, before a clear fire and clean hearth,—then it is that the afflatus descends upon Elia—then does his pen begin the pleasing "rigour of the game."

His distaste for Nature Lamb sets forth at all times with most cordial and conscientious acrimony. Coleridge sang of him,

> "My gentle Charles, and Thou hast pined
> And hungered after Nature, many a year,
> In the great city pent."

Lamb repelled the imputation, and disclaimed his right to be called "gentle." He named several vile titles which he preferred to that one. And yet it has come to pass that on the forehead of his fame, as best interpreting the unobtrusive, self-sacrificing spirit that sanctifies and ennobles it, is that sole epithet bestowed on him by his great poet-friend.

After he had gone from earth, the Bard of Rydal Mount, in noble verse said of him,

> "A scorner of the fields, my Friend,
> But more in show than truth."

If Lamb had been living he would have repudiated the reservation. Nevertheless, in such reservation lies all his strange, occult power. We are always making concessions to the shortcomings and tastes of the gentle Elia. He provides us the richest treat of any writer ancient or modern, sacred or profane—for in his greatest extravagances he stirs the slumbering charity in our breasts; he calls up all the benevolence we have in our nature for himself and his subject; to our amazement we find the milk of human-kindness flowing from those hearts of ours that were rocks to the pleading weaknesses and sorrows of our fellows—the accusing angel is silenced for once with us, and the excusing angel sings us a self-pleasing song.—Yet, with due "allowance for the wind," in all his waywardness we cannot fail to see Lamb's utter disqualification for any appreciation of Nature. Let us give one instance:—"It *(The Excursion)* is the noblest conversational poem I ever read—a day in Heaven. . . . That gorgeous sunset is famous; I think it must have been the identical one we saw on Salisbury Plain five years ago, that drew Phillipps from the card table, where he has sat from the rise of that luminary to its unequalled set."—Thus did Lamb write to Wordsworth!—Lamb alone could have dared in his innocent audacity to write so thoughtlessly to Nature's high-priest. It is no sunset at all that he is referring to. The poet is on the mountains and gives a description of the grandest supernal phenomena probably ever witnessed by man in full day, or as he avers,

> "ever seen
> By waking sense or by the dreaming soul."

And, then, Lamb brings it in connexion with a day spent at "the card table!"

Verily, Elia should be believed in all that he says regarding City *versus* Nature.—Nature! when he is young he likes not, and when he is old he

turns from her. When young he cries "I have no passion for groves and valleys": when retired and at ease—master of "all the golden part of the day, from ten to four," which he longed to possess when groaning under the Egyptian bondage of Leadenhall Street, he exclaims—"Give me old London at fire and plague times, rather than these tepid gales, healthy country air, and purposeless exercise." That passion for London was ever supreme and ruling in his breast: strong in youth, gaining strength with years, it was unabated in the close of life. At twenty-six years of age he wrote to Wordsworth:—"I have passed all my days in London, until I have formed as many and as intense local attachments as any of your mountaineers can have done with your dead Nature," which he verified by his visit to the Lakes, and regarding which he afterwards confessed that he felt himself obliged when there to think of the ham-and-beef shop near St. Martin's Lane, as a region more congenial to him. At fifty-five years of age, when withdrawn to Enfield, he passionately exclaimed to Patmore, "I hate Nature," and he wrote thus:—"Some molesting yearnings of life, not quite killed, rise, *prompting me that there is a London, and that I was of that Old Jerusalem.* In dreams I am in Fleet Street, but I wake and cry to sleep again. . . . Under this roof now ought I to take my rest, but that *back-looking ambition tells me I might yet be a Londoner*": and three years later, the year before his death, he wrote from Edmonton, "London streets and faces cheer me inexpressibly, though not one known of the latter were remaining."

Verily, Elia shall be believed. He wrote to Bernard Barton in 1830,—"The more my character comes to be known, the less my veracity will come to be suspected." Even so we take him at his word in all things, and cannot, therefore, suspect him in this matter. He has made it too plain. Believe him we sincerely do when he dogmatically asserts that "a garden was the primitive prison, till man, with Promethean felicity and boldness, luckily sinned himself out of it. Thence followed Babylon, Nineveh, Venice, London, haberdashers, goldsmiths, taverns, playhouses, satires, epigrams, puns,—these all came in on the town part, and *the thither side of innocence.*" Believe him, too, we do, when he avows his readiness to be a martyr for his love—"I would live in London shirtless, bookless." We believe him, for his imagination spread over all the stir and sights of the mighty city a many-coloured yet as magical a light as lay upon it when Wordsworth saw it in the early morning; we do believe him—in virtue of his imagination, and for his very reasons, too,—"Covent Garden is dearer to me than any gardens of Alcinoüs, where we are morally sure of the earliest peas and 'sparagus."

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"*Garden and country lanes,*" page 19.

Much as he was devoted to Books, Hunt never lost his regard for Nature, never lost an answering tone of mind to her sights and sounds. With all his library-devotion he might have cried with Wordsworth in *The Tables Turned*,

> "Up! Up! my Friend, and quit your books!
> Let Nature be your teacher.
> She has a world of ready wealth,
> Our minds and hearts to bless –
> Spontaneous wisdom breathed by health,
> *Truth breathed by Cheerfulness.*"

Hear Hunt's prose philosophy on the matter when he has to speak of Trees—"Trees help to supply us with poetry and reflection. They rejoice us when we are glad; and whisper calmness to our sorrows. It has been said by a Great Authority that 'man does not live by bread alone.' It may also be said that man does not live in houses alone; he lives in fresh air, in exercise, *in the healthy dominions of nature.* A walk under the trees is like music for soothing the spirits."

"*Passing away of Charles Lamb,*" page 22.

Elia was buried in Edmonton churchyard, with twelve lines inscribed over him contributed by the pauper-muse of Cary the translator of Dante. Can there be in this, a mild retribution on his dust for the incidental summer lightning play of his humour on such effusions?

It is well known that the epitaph on Hunt is the last line of his translation of *Mahmoud;*

> "Write me as one who loves his fellow-man!"

But it is not so well known that Lamb sportively acted the part of jesting Pilate with the same sentiment, "I sate down upon a hillock at Forty Hill yesternight,—a fine contemplative evening,—with a thousand good speculations about mankind. How I yearned with cheap benevolence! I shall go and enquire of the stone-cutter, that cuts the tombstones here, what a stone with a short inscription costs; just to say, 'Here C. Lamb loved his brethren of mankind.' Everybody will come there to love."

"*Armorer Donkin,*" page 25.

The dedication of the *Legend of Florence* informs us that Hunt was indebted for health and leisure to indulge in the composition of the play through the practical wisdom and generosity of Armorer Donkin. We find that gentleman's name also referred to by Thornton Hunt in Leigh

Hunt's *Correspondence*. He is mentioned as one of those friends "most generous in the manner as well as the amount of their sacrifices;" and in one of his letters there is "a formal debtor and creditor account, setting off against a sum of money advanced at a pinch, the same sum—By value received in full, per pleasure in reading Leigh Hunt's *London Journal*."

This commercial dealing with literary merit, was after the manner in which the actor Quin settled a like transaction. He called upon Thomson during a period of the poet's greatest embarrassments. "I have come to square accounts," said the actor. Thomson in perplexity asked for an explanation of the words, which sounded as ominous as a challenge, or a writ. Quin abruptly rejoined, "The pleasure I have had in perusing your works I cannot certainly estimate at less than £100, and I insist upon requiting that debt,"—and on the words Quin put down the money and took his leave.

"*Egerton Webbe*," page 25.

We give two out of the five epigrams quoted by Hunt in juxtaposition to those of Martial :—

CONCERNING JONES.

Jones eats his lettuces undressed;
D'ye ask the reason? 'Tis confessed –
That is the way Jones likes them best.

TO THOMSON—CONCERNING DIXON AND JACKSON.

How Dixon can with Jackson bear,
You ask me, Thomson, to declare?
Thomson, Dixon's Jackson's heir!

"Were ever three patronymics jumbled so together!" says Hunt, "or with such a delightful importance? It is like the jingling of the money in Jackson's pocket."

"*The pages of the Examiner and Reflector*," page 26.

In the *Monthly Repository* (1837, p. 231), Hunt refers to the *Examiner*: "It was the Robin Hood of its cause, plunder excepted. . . . Hazlitt, in its pages, first made the public sensible of his great powers. There Keats and Shelley were first made known to the lovers of the beautiful. There Charles Lamb occasionally put forth a piece of criticism, worth twenty of the editor's, though a value was found in those also."

"*Reconciled to men*," page 27.

The passage from which we quote this sentence will be found in Hunt's Autobiography, vol. ii. p. 77.

"*He condemned fishing*," page 28.

Yes, and fowling also, upon which there is an article in this same *London Journal* (vol i. p. 170). Hunt's first article on Angling appears in the *Indicator* of 17th November, 1819; his last, probably, in his Autobiography published in 1850 (vol. i., pp. 47-49), wherein he attacked the anglers with his original earnestness, and reprehended Wordsworth for addressing a sonnet to Izaak Walton, and quoted (in a mutilated form) the injunction of the concluding lines of *Hartleap Well* against the professors of the piscatorial art:—

Never to blend our pleasure or our pride
With sorrow of the meanest thing that feels.

Where shall we hope to find consistency when critical essayist and philosophising poet equally become at variance with themselves?

"*Saint Francis de Sales*," page 30.

Hunt's admiration for this holy man has recently, according to popular announcements, had the strongest justification by Dr. Pusey constituting Francis his own particular patron saint.

"*Raindrop . . . a visitor from the solitudes of time*," page 33.

In the same manner does the imagination of Wordsworth go forth upon hearing "the soft murmur of the vagrant Bee."

—— A slender sound! Yet hoary Time
Doth to the *soul* exalt it with the chime
Of all his years!—a company
Of ages coming, ages gone,
(Nations from before them sweeping,
Regions in destruction steeping,)
But every awful note in unison
With that faint utterance.

Wordsworth's muse, however, once having spread her wing, sails with supreme dominion through higher spheres, and beholds from her empyrean height that the Bee is

Of ancestry
Mysteriously remote and high,
High as the imperial front of man,
The roseate bloom on woman's cheek.

And backward she sweeps her ken to the time when the sting of Bee perchance was needless; when the golden years maintained an even course; when

Tears had not broken from their source,
Nor anguish strayed from her Tartarian den.

"*Suppose flowers themselves were new! . . . a sweet reward for goodness*," page 34.

If we had not taken Coleridge's definition of genius for one of our mottoes, we should have used it now in connexion with Hunt's imagination

regarding flowers just coming into the world. Here we have a fine illustration of the child's sense of wonder and novelty in combination with everyday appearances. Equally so are the subjects of the preceding note—the Rain Drop—and the vagrant Bee: to which we should add, on the suggestion of the moment, Gray's prose description of a Sunrise, when with childlike, yet deep-searching amazement he cried:—"I wonder whether anybody ever saw it before. I hardly believe it,"—also, Blanco White's sonnet *On Night*; which Coleridge pronounced to be "the best in the English language," and of which Hunt himself, whilst critically eluding Coleridge's dictum, says—"In point of *thought* the sonnet stands supreme, perhaps above all in any language. Nor can we ponder on it too deeply, or with too hopeful a reverence."—*The Book of the Sonnet*, vol. i., p. 259.

"*For twenty years past. . . . keeping up a certain fragrant and flowery belief on the altars of May and June*," page 34.

Some proof of the punctuality of Hunt's votive offerings may be seen in his contributions to the *Literary Pocket-Book of 1819*, which were published separately in 1821 under the title of *The Months:* in his *May Day* article in the twenty-ninth number of the *Indicator*, and his *A Now—descriptive of a Hot Day* in the June number of the same periodical—both in 1820; in the article which he inserts on May 9th, 1821, on *Gardens and Flowers—Our Associations with:* and in his articles *May-Day and Shakespeare's Birth-Day*, and *May-Day at Holly Lodge* found in *The Companion* for May, 1828.

"*Maiano*," page 35.

Hazlitt, in his *Notes of a Journey through France and Italy*, has described the position of the house Hunt lived in when Hazlitt visited him. "With a view like this," he says, "one may think one's sight 'enriched,' in Burns's phrase."

"*The writer's personality*," page 35.

We do not find in Hunt's writings anything contrary to his character. An examination of the incidents of his life (some of the leading features of which are given in these notes) will fully prove that his writings fairly pictured forth the man. Sufferings he had, and he bore them patiently and cheerfully. He did not quail under persecution. Not of him could it be said, that he had "la hardiesse dans l'imagination mais de la timidité dans le caractère." Coleridge was greater in conversation—or monologue, or extemporaneous inspiration—as men chose to define his powers,—than

on paper. Every other writer of his time was less, except Hunt, and he was uniform. He was the same in talk as in print: the man suffered no change by the form of expression. How distinct was this identity may be learned from Hazlitt's words, in his Essay on *Conversations of Authors*. "The reader may get a very good idea of Leigh Hunt's Conversation from a very agreeable paper he has lately published, called the *Indicator*, than which nothing can be more happily conceived or executed."

"*THE Twelfth Night*," page 35.

Writing to Mary Shelley, on the 9th March, 1819, he refers to the event as follows:—"We had a most glorious Twelfth Night, with *tea in the study at half-past six* (in the morning), and the women all sparkling to the last."

"*Errata*," page 36.

These are beyond the control of the most despotic precisian. Hunt groaned under the humourous transformation effected by that mischievous demon the P. D., in his *Bacchus in Tuscany*, when amidst other witcheries "poison" became "prison," and priests and students instead of "flitting about," went "flirting about" (*Autobiography*, vol. iii., p. 117): but it was a still more serious matter with him when in the review of a volume by a contributor to the *Monthly Repository*, Hunt was made to say—he "*is a poet*; and may go on his way, rejoicing in the dignity and vanity of that appellation." The contributor was missed afterwards in the pages of the magazine. Hunt attempted to allure "the gifted author" back by an explanation that "vanity" should have been "rarity"—and tried to soothe the vexed spirit, by recalling the words of Plato that "A poet is a light, a winged, a sacred thing." But

"Alas for the rarity
Of Christian charity,—"

or it may have been fear of further purgatorial pains at the hands of the imp of inkiness, contributions from the bard nevermore lighted on the pages of the magazine—at least whilst under the combined management of Hunt and *Orion* Horne.

It is amusing to notice how gentle Elia found it necessary to relieve his heart by a strong utterance, when stung by the scorpion that often lurks under the fairest leaf. "I have just finished the pleasing task of correcting the revise of poems and letter," he writes to Wordsworth, in April, 1818. Ah! it was the first collected edition of his writings with which he had been busy. Hunt wrote respecting it to Shelley the same April, whilst he (Hunt) had the proof sheets fluttering about him at Lisson Grove. Lamb on that event rejoiced in a foretaste of the spicy wreaths of incense from

the hill of fame,—but, at that moment came savour of poisonous type and misprint sick,—and he continued : "One blunder I saw and shuddered at. The hallucinating rascal printed *battered* for *battened*, the last not conveying any distinct sense to his gaping soul."

"*To justify any well-grounded opinions*," page 39.

Let it not be understood that we undervalue these in any way. All we say is, that not by such measure have we measured this *London Journal*. When the general question of Leigh Hunt's position as an Essayist and a Poet is considered, then we are truly glad to have the help and the assurance that names such as we have mentioned can give, whether it be Old Christopher informing us that this same *London Journal* lies on his breakfast-table,—"like a spot of sunshine dazzling the snow;" or the successor of the great Scotch critic, incidentally, in his early impetuous Bacchic style, defining Hunt as "a fine tricksy medium between the poet and the wit, half a sylph and half an Ariel, now hovering round a lady's curl, and now stirring the fiery tresses of the sun—a fairy fluctuating bark, connecting Pope with Shelley." We fully appreciate, aye, even treasure the words of all prominent writers and admirers, when they refer to the consideration of Hunt's genius and character, if they should come only as crumbs by the wayside, as when Gilfillan in his paper on Shelley, speaking of *Adonais*, says—

"What gentle form is hushed over the dead?"

"It is Leigh Hunt, the discoverer of the boy-poet, who found him as a naturalist finds a new variety of violet while gazing on its native stream, amid the silent woods, and who taught, loved, honoured the departed one.'" Nay, we have not hesitated in other matters to divert an author's language as more applicable to our own theme, to wrest the words to what we believe to be their due propriety, and we would act in the same spirit in the present case. Thus, in the remarks of Gilfillan on Addison, we cannot but think the wrong man has got the golden spoons, so exquisitely suitable are they to Leigh Hunt:—"How soft and rich the everlasting April of his style! By what green pastures and still waters does he lead us! What a tremble there is in his beautiful sentences, like that of a twilight wave just touched by the west wind's balmy breath! How he stammers out his mild sublimities! How much does his stammer, like a beautiful child's, add to their effect! His piety, so sweet and shepherd-like; his kindness, so unaffected; his mannerism, so agreeable; his humour, so delicate, so sly, so harmless."

MANCHESTER :
PRINTED BY A. IRELAND AND CO.,
PALL MALL.

00065185

Digitized with financial assistance from the
Government of Maharashtra
on 18 July, 2018